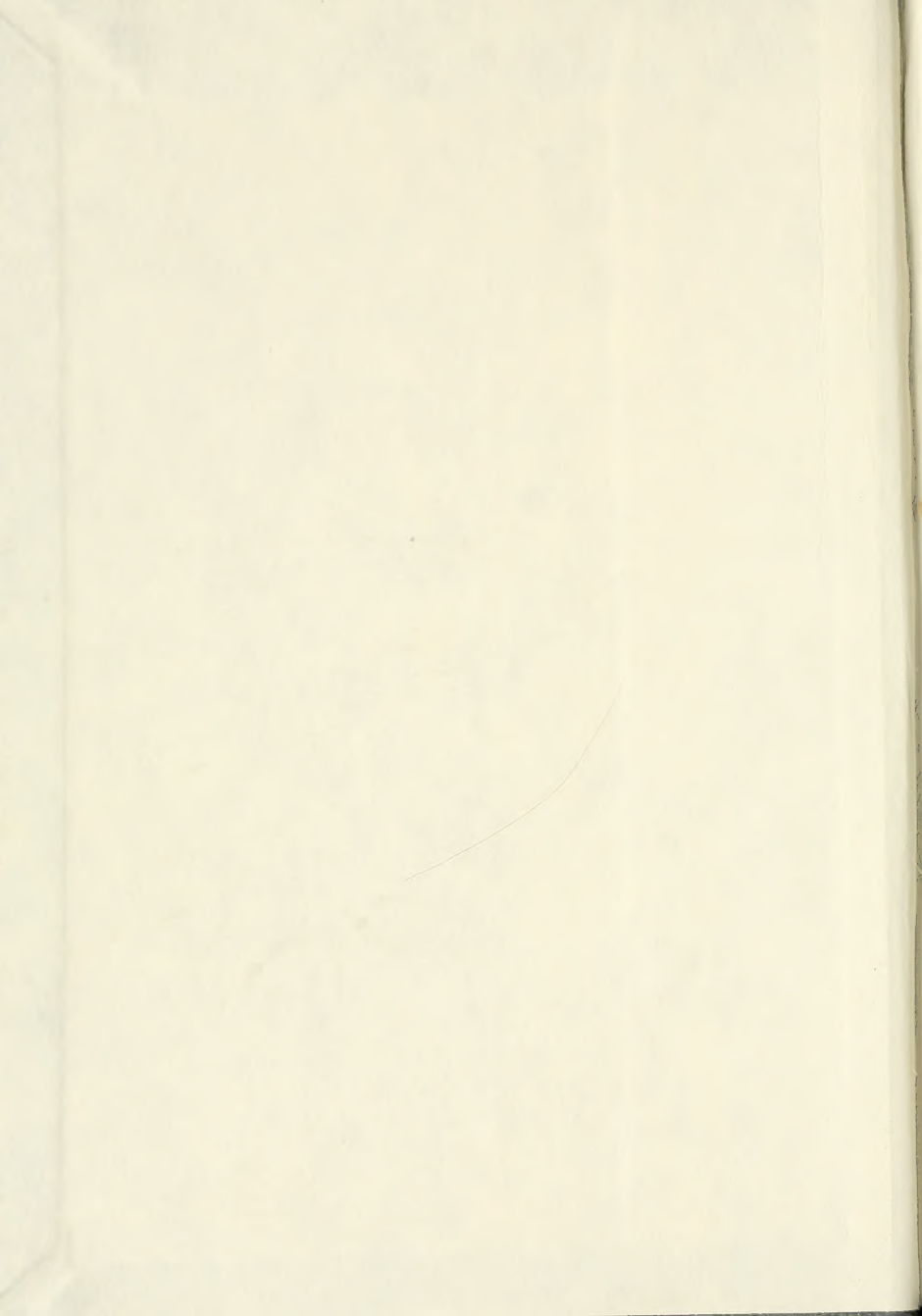


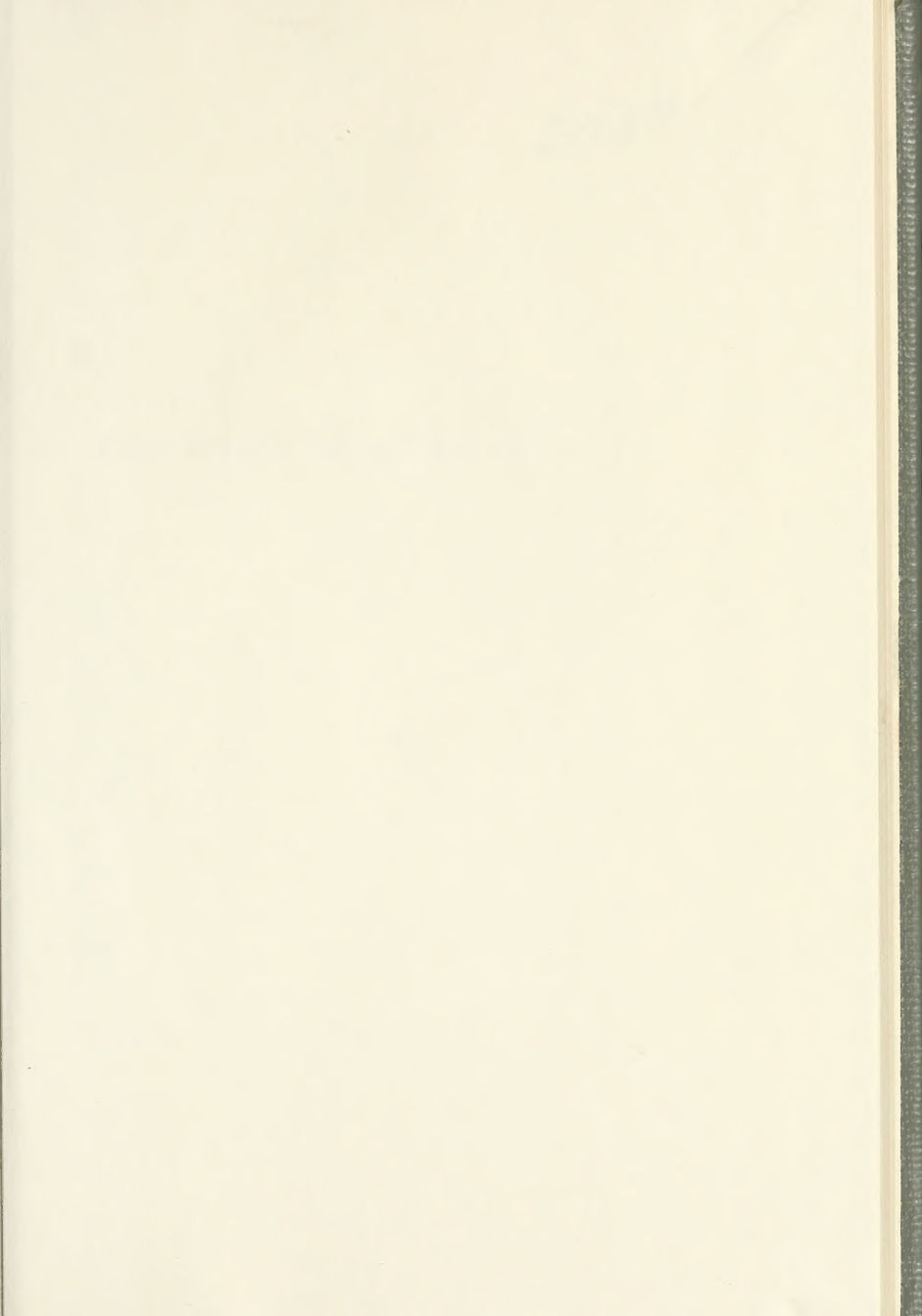
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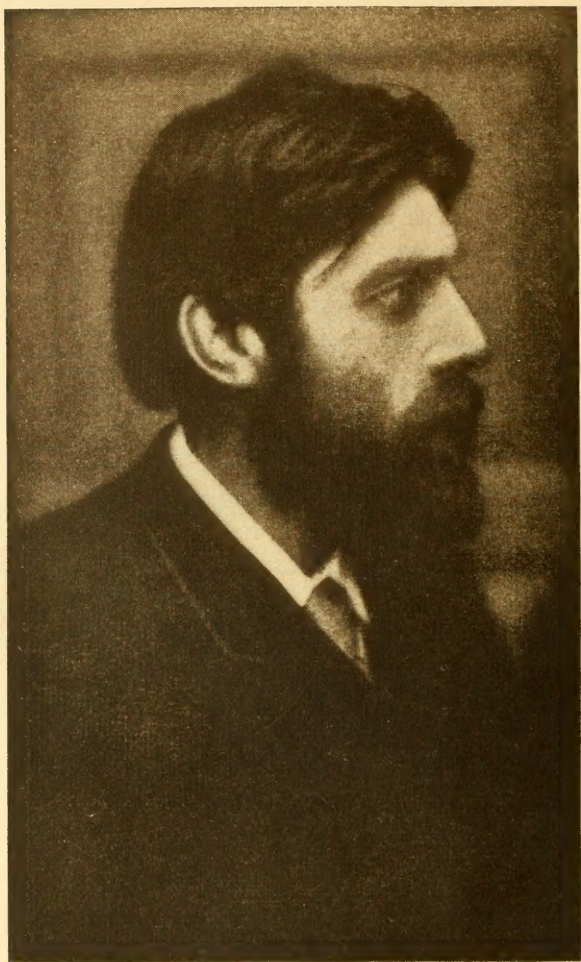
# THE GROWTH OF LOVE

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Robert Bridges

# THE GROWTH OF LOVE

BY ROBERT BRIDGES



PORTLAND MAINE  
THOMAS B MOSHER  
MDCCCCXIII



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THE GROWTH OF LOVE



# I

THEY that in play can do the thing they would  
Having an instinct throned in reason's place,  
— And every perfect action hath the grace  
Of indolence or thoughtless hardihood —  
These are the best : yet be there workmen good  
Who lose in earnestness control of face  
Or reckon means and rapt in effort base  
Reach to their ends by steps well understood.

Me whom thou sawst of late strive with the pains  
Of one who spends his strength to rule his nerve —  
Even as a painter breathlessly who strains  
His scarcely moving hand lest it should swerve —  
Behold me now free from the care that stains  
And master of the art I chose to serve.



## II

FOR thou art mine. And now I am ashamed  
To have used means to win so pure acquist  
And of my trembling fear that might have missed  
Through very care the gold at which I aimed :  
And am as happy but to hear thee named,  
As are those gentle souls by angels kissed  
In pictures seen leaving their marble cist  
To go before the throne of grace unblamed.

Nor surer am I water hath the skill  
To quench my thirst or that my strength is freed  
In measure, grace and motion as I will  
Than that to be myself is all I need  
For thee to be most mine : so I stand still  
And save to taste my joy no more take heed.

### III

THE whole world now is but the minister  
Of thee to me : I see no other scheme  
But universal love from timeless dream  
Waking to thee his joy's interpreter.  
I walk around and in the fields confer  
Of love at large with tree and flower and stream  
And list the lark descant upon thy theme  
Heaven's musical accepted worshipper.

Thy smile outfaceth ill : and that old feud  
'Twixt things and me is quashed in our new truce :  
And Nature now dearly with thee endued  
No more in shame ponders her old excuse  
But quite forgets her frowns and antics rude  
So kindly hath she grown to her new use.

#### IV

THE very names of things we love are dear  
And sounds will gather beauty from their sense,  
As many a face through love's long residence  
Groweth to fair instead of plain and sere :  
But when I say thy name it hath no peer  
And I suppose fortune determined thence  
Her dower, that such beauty's excellence  
Should have a perfect title for the ear :

For I must think the adopting Muses chose  
Their sons by name, knowing none would be heard  
Or writ so oft in all the world as those :  
Dan Chaucer, mighty Shakespeare, then for third  
The classic Milton, and to us arose  
Shelley with liquid music in the word.

# V

THE poets were good teachers for they taught  
 Earth had this joy, but that 't would ever be  
 That fortune should be perfected in me  
 My heart of hope dared not engage the thought.  
 So I stood low, and now but to be caught  
 By any self-styled lords of the age with thee  
 Vexes my modesty, lest they should see  
 I hold them owls and peacocks, things of nought.

And when we sit alone, and as I please  
 I taste thy love's full smile and can enstate  
 The pleasure of my kingly heart at ease :  
 My thought swims like a ship, that with the weight  
 Of her rich burden sleeps on the infinite seas  
 Becalmed, and cannot stir her golden freight.

## VI

WHILE yet we wait for spring and from the dry  
And blackening east that so embitters March,  
Well housed must watch grey fields and meadows parch  
And driven dust and withering snowflake fly :  
Already in glimpses of the tarnished sky  
The sun is warm and beckons to the larch,  
And where the covert hazels interarch  
Their tasselled twigs, fair beds of primrose lie.

Beneath the crisp and wintry carpet hid  
A million buds but stay their blossoming  
And trustful birds have built their nests amid  
The shuddering boughs, and only wait to sing  
Till one soft shower from the south shall bid  
And hither tempt the pilgrim steps of spring.

## VII

IN thee my spring of life hath bid the while  
A rose unfold beyond the summer's best,  
The mystery of joy made manifest  
In love's self-answering and awakening smile :  
Whereby the lips in silence reconcile  
Desire with peace, and pleading in arrest  
Of passion, shew the beauty left unguessed  
Of Greece to adorn at last the Tuscan style :

When first the wonder conquering faith had kenned  
Fancy pourtrayed, above the strength of oath  
Revealed of God or light of poem penned,  
The countenance of ancient-plighted troth  
'Twixt heaven and earth, that in one moment blend  
The hope of one and happiness of both.

## VIII

For beauty being the best of all we know  
Sums up the unsearchable and secret aims  
Of nature, and on joys whose heavenly names  
Were never told can form and sense bestow.  
And man hath sped his instinct to outgo  
Nature in sound and shape, and daily frames  
Much for himself to countervail his shames,  
Building a tower above the head of woe.

And never was there work for beauty found  
Fairer than this, that she should make to cease  
The jarring woes that in the world abound.  
Nay with his sorrow may his smiles encrease,  
If from man's greater need beauty redound  
And claim his tears for homage of his peace.



## IX

THUS to thy beauty doth my fond heart look  
That late dismayed her faithless faith forebore  
And wins again her love lost in the lore  
Of schools and script of many a learned book :  
For thou what ruthless death untimely took  
Shalt now in better brotherhood restore  
And save my battered ship that far from shore  
High on the dismal deep in tempest shook.

So in despite of sorrow lately learned  
I still hold true to truth since thou art true,  
Nor wail the woe which thou to joy hast turned :  
Nor come the heavenly sun and bathing blue  
To my life's need more splendid and unearned  
Than hath thy gift outmatched desire and due.

## X

WINTER was not unkind because uncouth,  
His prisoned time made me a closer guest  
And gave thy graciousness a warmer zest  
Biting all else with keen and angry tooth :  
And bravelier the triumphant blood of youth  
Mantling thy cheek its happy home possess  
And sterner sport by day put strength to test  
And custom's feast at night gave tongue to truth.

Or say hath flaunting summer a device  
To match our midnight revelry that rang  
With steel and flame along the snow-girt ice?  
Or when we harked to nightingales that sang  
On dewy eves in spring, did they entice  
To gentler love than winter's icy fang?

## XI

THERE 's many a would-be poet at this hour  
Rhymes of a love and truth he never wooed  
And o'er his lamplit desk in solitude  
Deems that he sitteth in the Muses' bower.  
And while such thewless kine the fat devour  
And ever grow the leaner for their food  
Men look askance upon an art pursued  
By clerks that lack the pulse and smile of power.

So none of all our company, I boast,  
But now would mock my writing could they see  
How down the right it maps a jagged coast :  
Seeing they hold the manlier praise to be  
Strong hand and will and the heart best when most  
'T is sober, simple, true and fancy-free.

## XII

How could I quarrel or blame you most dear  
Who all thy virtues gavest and kept back none :  
Kindness and gentleness, truth without peer  
And beauty that my fancy fed upon?

Now not my life's contrition for my fault  
Can blot that day nor work me recompense,  
Though I might worthily thy worth exalt  
Making thee long amends for short offence.

For surely nowhere, love, if not in thee  
Are grace and truth and beauty to be found :  
And all my praise of these can only be  
A praise of thee, howe'er by thee disowned :

While still thou must be mine though far removed,  
And I for one offence no more beloved.

### XIII

Now since to me although by thee refused  
The world is left, I shall find pleasure still :  
The art I have ever loved but little used  
Will yield a world of fancies at my will.

And though where'er thou goest it is from me,  
I where I go thee in my heart must bear :  
And what thou wert that wilt thou ever be,  
My choice, my best, my loved and only fair.

Farewell, yet think not such farewell a change  
From tenderness, though once to meet or part  
But on short absence so could sense derange  
That tears have graced the greeting of my heart :

They were proud drops and had my leave to fall :  
Not on thy pity for my pain to call.

#### XIV

WHEN sometimes in an ancient house where state  
From noble ancestry is handed on,  
We see but desolation through the gate  
And richest heirlooms all to ruin gone :

Because maybe some fancied shame or fear  
Bred of disease or melancholy fate  
Hath driven the owner from his rightful sphere  
To wander nameless save to pity or hate.

What is the wreck of all he hath in fief  
When he that hath is wrecking? nought is fine  
Unto the sick, nor doth it burden grief  
That the house perish when the soul doth pine.

Thus I my state despise, slain by a sting  
So slight 't would not have hurt a meaner thing.

## XV

WHO builds a ship must first lay down the keel  
Of health, whereto the ribs of mirth are wed :  
And knit with beams and knees of strength, a bed  
For decks of purity, her floor and ceil.  
Upon her masts, adventure, pride and zeal,  
To fortune's wind the sails of purpose spread :  
And at the prow make figured maidenhead  
O'er ride the seas and answer to the wheel.

And let him deep in memory's hold have stored  
Water of Helicon : and let him fit  
The needle that doth true with heaven accord :  
Then bid her crew, love, diligence and wit  
With justice, courage, temperance come aboard,  
And at her helm the master reason sit.



## XVI

THIS world is unto God a work of art  
Of which the unaccomplished heavenly plan  
Lives in his masterpiece and grows with man  
Unto perfection and success in part.  
The ultimate creation stayed to start  
From the last creature for whom all began :  
Who child in what he is and what he can  
Hath yet God's judgment and desire at heart.

Knowledge denied him, and his little skill  
Cumbered by laws he never can annul,  
Baffled by qualities adverse and ill,  
With feeble hands, few years and senses dull,  
His art is nature's nature, and love still  
Makes his abode with the most beautiful.

## XVII

SAY who be these light-bearded sunburnt faces  
In negligent and travel-stained array  
That in the city of Dante come to-day  
Haughtily visiting her holy places?  
O these be noble men that hide their graces,  
True England's blood, her ancient glory's stay,  
By tales of fame diverted on their way  
Home from the rule of Oriental races.

Life-trifling lions these, of gentle eyes  
And motion delicate, but swift to fire  
For honour, passionate where duty lies,  
Most loved and loving: and they quickly tire  
Of Florence, that she one more day denies  
The embrace of wife and son, of sister or sire.

## XVIII

WHERE San Miniato's convent from the sun  
At forenoon overlooks the city of flowers  
I sat, and gazing on her domes and towers  
Called up her famous children one by one :  
And three who all the rest had far outdone,  
Mild Giotto first, who stole the morning hours,  
I saw, and god-like Buonarroti's powers,  
And Dante, gravest poet, her much wronged son.

Is all this glory, I said, another's praise?  
Are these heroic triumphs things of old  
And do I dead upon the living gaze?  
Or rather doth the mind that can behold  
The wondrous beauty of the works and days  
Create the image that her thoughts enfold.

## XIX

REJOICE ye dead, where'er your spirits dwell,  
Rejoice that yet on earth your fame is bright  
And that your names remembered day and night  
Live on the lips of those that love you well.  
Rejoice ye living ye that now excel  
And guard in nameless homes the sacred light :  
Rejoice, though prosperous folly in her spite  
Banish all them that from her rule rebel.

For the world's exile hath a richer meed  
Than a king's favourite : he shall arrive  
With the like triumph and return decreed  
To him who ne'er revisited alive  
His home but sang, — Doubt not I shall succeed  
For all the hindrance they within contrive.

## XX

WHO praiseth? If the poet have not known  
His work is beautiful, none can persuade :  
Nor doth our time that so wrongs Handel's shade  
Contrive his condemnation but its own.  
The comment writ on Shakespeare hath not shown  
The perfect judgment that alive he laid  
On his own work, which taketh since 't was made  
Grace nor disgrace save but of love alone.

And love in loving nothing that is vile  
Knows not the error of the mind, nor fears  
To set his seal in secret with a smile :  
But O could one as Purcell win the tears  
Of love, such praise were more than to beguile  
The learned fancies of a thousand years.

## XXI

THE world still goeth about to shew and hide,  
Befooled of all opinion, fond of fame :  
But he that can do well taketh no pride  
And seeth his error, undisturbed by shame :

So poor's the best our longest days can do,  
The most so little, diligently done,  
So mighty is the beauty that doth woo,  
So vast the joy that love from love hath won.

God's love to win is easy, for He loveth  
Desires fair attitude, nor strictly weighs  
The broken thing, but all alike approveth  
Which love hath aimed at Him : that is heaven's praise :

And if we look for any praise on earth  
'T is in man's love : all else is nothing worth.

## XXII

O FLESH and blood, comrade to tragic pain  
And clownish merriment: whose sense could wake  
Sermons in stones, and count death but an ache,  
All things as vanity, yet nothing vain:  
The world set in thy heart thy passionate strain  
Revealed anew: but thou for man didst make  
Nature twice natural, only to shake  
Her kingdom with the creatures of thy brain.

Lo Shakespeare, since thy time nature is loth  
To yield to art her fair supremacy:  
In conquering one thou hast so enriched both.  
What shall I say? for God — whose wise decree  
Confirmeth all He did by all He doth —  
Doubled His whole creation making thee.



### XXIII

I WOULD be a bird, and straight on wings I arise  
And carry purpose up to the ends of the air :  
In calm and storm my sails I feather and where  
By freezing cliffs the unransomed wreckage lies :  
Or strutting on hot meridian banks surprise  
The silence : over plains in the moonlight bare  
I chase my shadow and perch where no bird dare  
In treetops torn by fiercest winds of the skies.

Poor simple birds, foolish birds, then I cry,  
Ye pretty pictures of delight, unstirred  
By the only joy of knowing that ye fly :  
Ye are not what ye are, but rather, summed in a word,  
The alphabet of a god's idea, and I  
Who master it, I am the only bird.

## XXIV

O WEARY pilgrims chaunting of your woe  
That turn your eyes to all the peaks that shine,  
Hailing in each the citadel divine  
The which ye thought to have entered long ago :  
Until at length your feeble steps and slow  
Falter upon the threshold of the shrine,  
And your hearts overburdened doubt in fine  
Whether it be Jerusalem or no :

Disheartened pilgrims, I am one of you,  
For having worshipped many a barren face  
I scarce now greet the goal I journeyed to :  
I stand a pagan in the heavenly place,  
Beneath the lamp of truth I am found untrue  
And question with the glory I embrace.

## XXV

SPRING hath her own bright days of calm and peace :  
Her melting air, at every breath we draw,  
Floods heart with love to praise God's gracious law :  
But suddenly — so short is pleasure's lease —  
The cold returns, the buds from growing cease  
And nature's conquered face is full of awe :  
As now the traitrous north with icy flaw  
Freezes the dew upon the sick lamb's fleece.

And 'neath the mock sun searching everywhere  
Rattles the crispéd leaves with shivering din :  
So that the birds are silent with despair  
Within the thickets, nor their armour thin  
Will gaudy flies adventure in the air  
Nor any lizard sun his spotted skin.

## XXVI

NOTHING is joy without thee : I can find  
No rapture in the first relays of spring,  
In songs of birds, in young buds opening,  
Nothing inspiriting and nothing kind :  
For lack of thee who once wert throned behind  
All beauty, like a strength where graces cling :  
The jewel and heart of light which everything  
Wrestled in rivalry to hold enshrined.

Ah, since thou 'rt fled and I in each fair sight  
The sweet occasion of my joy deplore,  
Where shall I seek thee best or whom invite  
Within thy sacred temples and adore?  
Who shall fill thought and truth with old delight  
And lead my soul in life as heretofore?

## XXVII

THE work is done and from the fingers fall  
The bloodwarm tools that brought the labour through :  
The tasking eye that overrunneth all  
Rests, and affirms there is no more to do.

Now the third joy of making, the sweet flower  
Of blessed work bloometh in godlike spirit :  
Which whoso plucketh holdeth for an hour  
The shrivelling vanity of mortal merit.

And thou, my perfect work, thou 'rt of to-day :  
To-morrow a poor and alien thing wilt be,  
True only should the swift life stand at stay :  
Therefore farewell nor look to bide with me.

Go find thy friends if there be one to love thee :  
Casting thee forth, my child, I rise above thee.

## XXVIII

THE fabled sea-snake, old Leviathan,  
Or else what grisly beast of scaly chine  
That champed the oceanwrack, and swashed the brine  
Before the new and milder days of man,  
Had never rib nor bray nor swindging fan  
Like his iron swimmer of the Clyde or Tyne,  
Late born of golden seed to breed a line  
Of offspring swifter and more huge of plan.

Straight is her going, for upon the sun  
When once she hath looked, her path and place are plain  
With tireless speed she smiteth one by one  
The shuddering seas and foams along the main :  
And her eased breath when her wild race is run  
Roars through her nostrils like a hurricane.

## XXIX

A THOUSAND times hath in my heart's behoof  
My tongue been set his passion to impart :  
A thousand times hath my too coward heart  
My mouth reclosed and fixed it to the roof :  
Then with such cunning hath it held aloof,  
A thousand times kept silence with such art  
That words could do no more : yet on thy part  
Hath silence given a thousand times reproof.

I should be bolder, seeing I commend  
Love that my dilatory purpose primes,  
But fear lest with my fears my hope should end.  
Nay I would truth deny and burn my rhymes,  
Renew my sorrows rather than offend,  
A thousand times and yet a thousand times.

### XXX

I TRAVEL to thee with the sun's first rays  
That lift the dark west and unwrap the night :  
I dwell beside thee when he walks the height  
And fondly toward thee at his setting gaze.  
I wait upon thy coming, but always —  
Dancing to meet my thoughts if they invite —  
Thou hast outrun their longing with delight  
And in my solitude dost mock my praise.

I well might say 't were better not to have been  
Than such I am to be for such as thou :  
And couldst thou love me more my heart I'd wean  
And win a claim that none could disallow :  
But since that cannot be, O love, I lean  
Upon thy strength and ne'er was strong till now.



### XXXI

My lady pleases me and I please her,  
This know we both and I besides know well  
Wherefore I love her and I love to tell  
My love as all my loving songs aver.  
But what on her part could the passion stir  
Though 't is more difficult for love to spell  
Yet can I dare divine how this befel  
Nor will her lips deny it if I err.

She loves me first because I love her, then  
Loves me for knowing why she should be loved,  
And that I love to praise her, loves again.  
So from her beauty both our loves are moved  
And by her beauty are sustained, nor when  
The earth falls from the sun is this disproved.

## XXXII

IN all things beautiful I cannot see  
Her sit or stand, but love is stirred anew :  
'T is joy to watch the folds fall as they do,  
And all that comes is past expectancy.  
If she be silent, silence let it be :  
He who would bid her speak might sit and sue  
The deep-browed Phidian Jove to be untrue  
To his two thousand years' solemnity.

Ah but her launchéd passion when she sings  
Wins on the hearing like a shapen prow  
Borne by the mastery of its urgent wings :  
Or if she deign her wisdom, she doth show  
She hath the intelligence of heavenly things  
Unsullied by man's mortal overthrow.

### XXXIII

THUS to be humbled : 't is that ranging pride  
No refuge hath : that in his castle strong  
Brave reason sits beleaguered who so long  
Kept field but now must starve where he doth hide :  
That industry who once the foe defied  
Lies slaughtered in the trenches : that the throng  
Of idle fancies pipe their foolish song  
Where late the puissant captains fought and died.

Thus to be humbled : 't is to be undone,  
A forest felled, a city razed to ground,  
A cloak unsewn, unwoven and unspun  
Till not a thread remains that can be wound.  
And yet, O lover, thee the ruined one  
Love who hath humbled thus hath also crowned.

### XXXIV

I CARE not if I live, though life and breath  
Have never been to me so dear and sweet.  
I care not if I die, for I could meet —  
Being so happy — happily my death.  
I care not if I love : to-day she saith  
She loveth, and love's history is complete.  
Nor care I if she love me : at her feet  
My spirit bows entranced and worshipping.

I have no care for what was most my care  
But all around me see fresh beauty born  
And common sights grown lovelier than they were :  
I dream of love, and in the light of morn  
Tremble beholding all things very fair  
And strong with strength that puts my strength to scorn.

### XXXV

O MY goddess divine, — sometimes I say :  
Now let this word for ever and all suffice :  
Thou art insatiable, and yet not twice  
Can even thy lover give his soul away :  
And for my acts, that at thy feet I lay,  
For never any other by device  
Of wisdom love or beauty could entice  
My homage to the measure of this day.

I have no more to give thee : lo, I have sold  
My life, have emptied out my heart and spent  
Whate'er I had : till like a beggar, bold  
With nought to lose, I laugh and am content.  
A beggar kisses thee, nay love, behold,  
I fear not : thou too art in beggarment.

### XXXVI

ALL earthly beauty hath one cause and proof,  
To lead the pilgrim soul to beauty above :  
Yet lieth the greater bliss so far aloof  
That few there be are weaned from earthly love.  
Joy's ladder it is, reaching from home to home,  
The best of all the work that all was good :  
Whereof 't was writ the angels aye upclomb,  
Down sped, and at the top the Lord God stood.

But I my time abuse, my eyes by day  
Centered on thee, by night my heart on fire —  
Letting my numbered moments run away —  
Nor e'en 'twixt night and day to heaven aspire.

So true it is that what the eye seeth not  
But slow is loved and loved is soon forgot.

## XXXVII

ALREADY far have we sailed out to sea,  
Enough have proved our bark and hear the roar  
Of tempest overnigh that more and more  
Rages and lightens on the whitened lea.  
See how with naked masts the tall ships flee  
Like frightened phantoms from the dangerous shore,  
And not a boat contrives with sail or oar  
To stem the foundering waves: how then shall we?

Now time it is to make for port and haste  
In safety with the joy our perils earn:  
But let us bow that first the shrine be graced  
Of him who moves and draws all souls that yearn,  
With fair memorials of devotion placed  
For venturous voyage and for safe return.

### XXXVIII

THE bliss that Adam lost — eating in haste —  
He lost not all, for what he had he had :  
And still his sons are born as pure and glad  
As he when first by God in Eden placed.  
But what he took for them — daring to taste —  
He won outright, whether for good or bad :  
And in his footsteps all must issue sad  
Out of their garden, exiled and disgraced.

And therefore knowledge hath two hands : with one  
Pressed to her prisoned heart that mourns and yearns  
She guards her firstborn joy and shares with none :  
But with her busy right she moves and turns  
All tangible things, or gazing on the sun  
Shades her adventurous eye and ever learns.



### XXXIX

O MY life's mischief, once my love's delight,  
That drewst a mortgage on my heart's estate,  
Whose baneful clause is never out of date,  
Nor can avenging time restore my right :  
Whom first to lose sounded that note of spite  
Whereto my doleful days were tuned by fate :  
That art the well-loved cause of all my hate,  
The sun whose wandering makes my hopeless night :

Thou being in all my lacking all I lack,  
It is thy goodness turns my grace to crime,  
Thy fleetness from my goal which holds me back :  
Wherefore my feet go out of step with time,  
My very grasp of life is old and slack  
And even my passion falters in my rhyme.

## XL

AT times with hurried hoofs and scattering dust  
I race by field or highway, and my horse  
Spare not but urge direct in headlong course  
Unto some fair far hill that gain I must :  
But near arrived the vision soon mistrust,  
Rein in and stand as one who sees the source  
Of strong illusion, shaming thought to force  
From off his mind the soil of passion's gust.

My brow I bare then and with slackened speed  
Can view the country pleasant on all sides  
And to kind salutation give good heed.  
I ride as one who for his pleasure rides  
And stroke the neck of my delighted steed  
And seek what cheer the village inn provides.

## XLI

AN idle June day on the sunny Thames,  
Floating or rowing as our fancy led,  
Now listening to sweet things the young birds said  
And choosing now a nosegay from the gems  
That star the embroidery of the bank that hems  
The current that our skiff from Henley sped  
To where the Cliefden woods o'er Maidenhead  
Bar its still surface with their mirrored stems.

I would have life — thou saidst — all as this day,  
Simple enjoyment calm in its excess,  
With not a grief to cloud and not a ray  
Of passion overhot my peace to oppress :  
With no ambition to reproach delay,  
Nor rapture to disturb its happiness.

## XLII

WHETHER it be happiness to have enough  
And fear no want while most are poorly fed,  
To bring untired limbs to an easy bed  
While any workman's couch is cold and rough :  
And whether honour be of such dull stuff  
As likes the peace for which a brother bled,  
And virtue yet untried in comfort bred  
Can know her name and feel no self-rebuff:

Or if to yield themselves to worse and worse  
Were truly solace for the hearts that chafe —  
Since their nobility would choose the curse  
Rather to be than once deride the waif,  
Or hear the laugh — O blame not my poor verse  
That it is sad while comfort still is safe.

### XLIII

A MAN that sees by chance his picture, made  
As once a child he was, handling some toy,  
Will gaze to find his spirit within the boy,  
Yet hath no secret with the soul pourtrayed :  
He cannot think the simple thought which played  
Upon those features then so frank and coy :  
'T is his, yet oh, not his : and o'er the joy  
His fatherly pity bends in tears dismayed.

Proud of his prime maybe he stand at best  
And lightly wear his strength or aim it high,  
Most master now of all he e'er possest :  
Yet in the pictured face a charm doth lie,  
The one thing lost more worth than all the rest,  
Which seeing he fears to say — This child was I.

## XLIV

TEARS of love, tears of joy and tears of care,  
Comforting tears that fell uncomforted,  
Tears o'er the new-born, tears beside the dead,  
Tears of hope, pride and pity, trust and prayer :  
Tears of contrition, all tears whatsoe'er,  
Of tenderness or kindness had she shed  
Who here is pictured, ere upon her head  
The fine gold might be turned to silver there.

•

The smile that charmed the father hath given place  
Unto the furrowed care wrought by the son :  
But virtue hath transformed all change to grace.  
So that I praise the artist who hath done  
A portrait for my worship of the face  
Won by the heart my father's heart that won.

## XLV

IF I could but forget and not recall  
So well my time of pleasure and of play  
When ancient nature was all new and gay  
Light as the fashion that doth last enthrall :  
Ah mighty nature, when my heart was small  
Nor dreamed what fearful searchings underlay  
The flowers and leafy ecstasy of May,  
The breathing summer sloth, the scented fall.

Could I forget, then were the fight not hard,  
Pressed in the melee of accurséd things,  
Having such help in love and such reward :  
But that 't is I who once — 't is this that stings —  
Once dwelt within the gate that angels guard,  
Where yet I'd be had I but heavenly wings.

## XLVI

WHEN I see childhood on the threshold seize  
The prize of life from age and likelihood,  
I mourn time's change that will not be withstood,  
Thinking how Christ said — Be like one of these :  
For in the forest among many trees  
Scarce one in all is found that hath made good  
The virgin pattern of its slender wood  
That courtesied in joy to every breeze :

But scathed, but knotted trunks that raise on high  
Their arms in stiff contortion, strained and bare :  
Whose crowns in patriarchal sorrow sigh.  
So little children ye — nay nay, ye ne'er  
From me shall learn how sure the change and nigh  
When ye shall share our strength and mourn to share.



## XLVII

WHEN parched with thirst, astray on sultry sands  
The traveller faints, upon his closing ear  
Steals a fantastic music : he may hear  
The babbling fountain of his native land.  
Before his eyes the vision seems to stand  
Where at its terraced brink the maids appear  
Who fill their deep urns at its waters clear  
And not refuse the help of lover's hand.

O cruel jest — he cries, as some one flings  
The sparkling drops in sport or shew of ire —  
O shameless, O contempt of holy things.  
But never of their wanton play they tire  
As not athirst they sit beside the springs  
While he must quench in death his lost desire.

## XLVIII

THE image of thy love, rising on dark  
And desperate days above my sullen sea  
Wakens again fresh hope and peace in me,  
Gleaming above upon my groaning bark.  
Whate'er my sorrow be I then may hark  
A loving voice : whate'er my terror be  
This heavenly comfort still I win from thee  
To shine my lodestar that wert once my mark.

Prodigal nature makes us but to taste  
One perfect joy, which given she niggard grows  
And lest her precious gift should run to waste  
Adds to its loss a thousand lesser woes :  
So to the memory of the gift that graced  
Her hand, her graceless hand more grace bestows.

## XLIX

I WILL not marry thee, sweet Hope — I said —  
For all thy beauty nor thy promise sworn :  
Though thou the dayspring pledge, and rosy morn  
Already captive in thy train hast led.  
No clouded terror o'er the sun is spread,  
No noonday darkness like of love outworn :  
The cold star on his shining orbit borne  
With all his valleys dry, his verdure dead.

Nor hast thou any power to thrust aside  
Fate's cruel hand, nor any refuge shewn  
Where comfortless my widowed shame could hide.  
For me — in my cold sepulchre I'd groan  
Hearing men say, See Hope, — so late Love's bride,  
Whom now this vain Ambition has made his own.

## L

In this neglected, ruined edifice  
Of works unperfected and broken schemes,  
Where is the promise of my early dreams,  
The smile of beauty and the pearl of price?  
No charm is left now that could once entice  
Wind-wavering fortune from her golden streams,  
And full in flight decrepit purpose seems  
Trailing the banner of his old device.

Within the house a froze and numbing air  
Has chilled endeavour : sickly memories reign  
In every room and ghosts are on the stair :  
And hope behind the dusty window-pane  
Watches the days go by, and half aware  
Forecasts her last reproach and mortal stain.

## LI

ONCE I would say, before thy vision came,  
My joy, my life, my love, and with some kind  
Of knowledge speak and think I knew my mind  
Of heaven and hope, and each word hit its aim.  
Whate'er their sounds be, now all mean the same,  
Denoting each the fair I cannot find :  
Or if I say them 't is as one long blind  
Forgets what sights they were he used to name.

Now if men speak of love 't is not my love  
Nor are their hopes nor joys mine, nor the life  
They choose for praise the life I reckon of :  
Nay though they turn from house and child and wife  
And self, and in the thought of heaven above  
Hold, as do I, all mortal things at strife.

## LII

SINCE then 't is only pity looking back,  
Fear looking forward, and the busy mind  
Will in one woeful moment more upwind  
Than lifelong years unroll of bitter or black :  
What is man's privilege, his hoarding knack  
Of memory with foreboding so combined,  
Whereby he comes to dream he hath of kind  
The perpetuity which all things lack?

Which but to hope is doubtful joy, to have  
Being a continuance of what, alas,  
We mourn and scarcely bear with to the grave :  
Or something so unknown that it o'erpass  
The thought of comfort : and the sense that gave  
Cannot consider it through any glass.

### LIII

COME gentle sleep, I woo thee : come and take  
Not now the child into thine arms, from fright  
Composed by drowsy tune and shaded light,  
Whom ignorant of thee thou didst nurse and make :  
Nor now the boy who scorned thee for the sake  
Of growing knowledge or mysterious night,  
Though with fatigue thou didst his limbs invite  
And heavily weigh the eyes he strove to wake :

No, nor the man severe who from his best  
Failing, alert fled to thee, that his breath,  
Blood, force and fire should come at morn redrest :  
But me, from whom thy comfort tarrieth,  
For all my wakeful prayer sent without rest  
To thee, O shew and shadow of my death.

LIV

LET man lament his lot and then lament  
That he must so lament and then complain  
That all his lamentations are in vain :  
His tears betray his true affections bent.  
For liefest love first falls to discontent :  
As they who best know health will rage at pain  
And pine beyond their sickness to regain  
Their treasure treasured most when lost or spent :

Which being in them a dolour, none the less  
Inspires the cries of prime. The truly sad  
Are dumb : and they but honour happiness  
Who hanker after joys that once they had :  
Or surfeited of sweets turn and confess  
Their pleasure is to be no longer glad.



LV

THE spirit's eager sense for sad or gay  
Filleth with what he will our vessel full :  
Be joy his bent, he waiteth not joy's day  
But like a child at any toy will pull :

If sorrow, he will mourn for fancy's sake  
And spoil heaven's plenty with forbidden care.  
What fortune most denies we slave to take :  
Nor can fate load us more than we can bear.

And since in having, pleasure disappeareth,  
He who hath least in hand hath most at heart  
While he can hope : as he who always feareth  
A grief that never comes hath still the smart :

And worse than true is such unreal distress  
For when God sendeth sorrow, it doth bless.

## LVI

THE world comes not to an end : her city-hives  
Swarm with the tokens of a changeless trade,  
With rolling wheel, driver and flagging jade,  
Rich men and beggars, children, priests and wives.  
New homes on old are set as lives on lives,  
Invention with invention overlaid :  
But still or tool or toy or book or blade  
Shaped for the hand that holds and toils and strives.

The men I meet work as their fathers wrought  
With little bettered means : for works depend  
On works and overlap, and thought on thought.  
And through all change the smiles of hope amend  
The weariest face, the same love changed in nought :  
In this thing too the world comes not to an end.

## LVII

SINCE in the love of Christ my enterprise  
To do thee honour groweth day by day,  
And with the growth of love the words I say  
Are daily worthier of thee and more wise :  
Like a rich Jew I book my merchandise  
In fairest hand and hoard my gains away,  
Counting the hours ere I shall quite repay  
More than the full account against me lies :

But not the joy : alas I in my grave  
Shall be and thou in thine ere this befall :  
'T is but a memory my verse can save.  
Of this my wealth too if I give thee all  
Sorrow for pleasure pay I, and I crave  
A loan of time that flies beyond recall.

## LVIII

O MY uncared-for songs what are ye worth,  
That in my secret book with so much care  
I write you, this one here and that one there,  
Marking the time and order of your birth?  
Now, with a fancy so unkind to mirth,  
A sense so hard, a style so worn and bare,  
Look ye for any welcome anywhere  
From any shelf or heart-home on the earth?

Should others ask you this, say then I yearned  
To write you such as once, when I was young,  
Finding I should have loved and thereto turned.  
'T were something yet to live again among  
The gentle youth beloved and where I learned  
My art be there remembered for my song.

## LIX

WHO takes the census of the living dead,  
Ere the day come when memory shall o'ercrowd  
The kingdom of their fame, and for that proud  
And airy people find no room nor stead?

Ere hoarding Time, that ever thrusteth back  
The fairest treasures of his ancient store,  
Better with best confound, so he may pack  
His greedy gatherings closer, more and more?

Let the true Muse rewrite her sullied page  
And purge her story of the men of hate,  
That they go dirgeless down to Satan's rage  
With all else foul deformed and miscreate :

She hath full toil to keep the names we love  
Honoured on earth as they are bright above.

## LX

I HEARD great Hector sounding war's alarms  
Where through the listless ghosts chiding he strode,  
As though the Greeks besieged his last abode,  
And he his Troy's hope still, her king at arms.  
But on those gentle meads where nothing harms  
And purpose perishes, his passion glowed  
Like the cold nightworm's candle nor scarce shewed  
The heart death kills not quite nor Lethé charms.

'T was plain to read even by those shadows quaint  
How rude catastrophe had dimmed his day  
And blighted all his cheer with stern complaint.  
To arms, to arms, — what more the voice would say  
Was swallowed in the valleys and grew faint  
Upon the thin air as he passed away.

## LXI

SINCE peace came down to me, I well know whence,  
O perfected and happy spirit, 't was sped :  
And who did lead me whither I was led,  
Drawn by sweet airs and plaintive innocence.  
So lost when thou didst seem departing hence,  
I too enrolled myself among the dead  
And left my home of homes unvisited,  
Exiled from memory for my woe's defence.

But see the doors fast shut by grief and pride,  
Reopened : see kind peace returned in spite  
Of this sad heart which thee so long denied :  
For thou my joy, whate'er, or day or night,  
I think or do, again art by my side,  
My lost and won, my treasure and life's delight.

## LXII

SWEET sleep, dear unadornéd bride of toil,  
Whom in the dusk of night men's bodies low  
Lie to receive, and thy loved coming know,  
Closing the cloudy gate on day's turmoil :  
Thou through the soft ways enterest to despoil  
The ready spirit and on worn flesh bestow  
Such comfort as through trembling souls will flow  
When God's Welldone doth all their sins assoil.

Thought looseth at thy touch her troubled hold,  
Hand, eye and ear fail, and the world's fair show  
Is blotted clean : or then thou mayst unfold —  
Brightening the hours of sure renewal slow —  
Thy careless pageantries, pictures untold,  
Joys which the tasking sun melteth like snow.



### LXIII

SINCE not the enamoured sun with glance more fond  
Kisses the foliage of his sacred tree,  
Than doth my waking thought arise on thee,  
Loving none near thee, like thee nor beyond :  
Nay since I am sworn thy slave and in the bond  
Is writ my promise of eternity :  
Since to such high hope thou 'st encouraged me  
That if thou look but from me I despond :

Since thou 'rt my all in all, O think of this :  
Think of the dedication of my youth :  
Think of my loyalty, my joy, my bliss :  
Think of my sorrow, my despair and ruth,  
My sheer annihilation if I miss :  
Think — if thou shouldst be false — think of thy truth.

#### LXIV

THESE meagre rhymes which a returning mood  
Sometimes o'errateth, I as oft despise :  
And knowing them illnatured, stiff and rude,  
See them as others with contemptuous eyes.

Nay and I wonder less at God's respect  
For man, a minim jot in time and space,  
Than at the soaring faith of His elect,  
That gift of gifts, the comfort of His grace.

O work unsearchable, O heavenly love,  
Most infinitely tender, so to touch  
The work that we can meanly reckon of :  
Surely — I say — we are favoured overmuch.

But of this wonder, what doth most amaze  
Is that we know our love is held for praise.

## LXV

BEAUTY sat with me all the summer day,  
Awaiting the sure triumph of her eye :  
Nor marked I till we parted how, hard by,  
Love in her train stood ready for his prey.  
She as too proud to join herself the fray,  
Trusting too much to her divine ally,  
When she saw victory tarry chid him — Why  
Dost thou not at one stroke this rebel slay?

Then generous Love who holds my heart in fee  
Told of our ancient truce : so from the fight  
We straight withdrew our forces, all the three.  
Baffled but not disheartened she took flight,  
Scheming new tactics : Love came home with me  
And prompts my measured verses as I write.

## LXVI

IN autumn moonlight when the white air wan  
Is fragrant in the wake of summer hence  
'T is sweet to sit entranced and muse thereon  
In melancholy and godlike indolence :

When the proud spirit lulled by mortal prime  
To fond pretence of immortality  
Vieweth all moments from the birth of time,  
All things whate'er have been or yet shall be.

And like the garden where the year is spent,  
The ruin of old life is full of yearning,  
Mingling poetic rapture of lament  
With flowers and sunshine of spring's sure returning :

Only in visions of the white air wan  
By godlike fancy seized and dwelt upon.

## LXVII

WHEN first I saw thee, dearest, if I say  
The spells that conjure back the hour and place,  
And evermore I look upon thy face,  
As in the spring of years long passed away :  
No fading of thy beauty's rich array,  
No detriment of age on thee I trace,  
But time's defeat written in spoils of grace,  
Robbed from the rivals thou didst pity and slay.

So hath thy growth been, thus thy faith is true,  
Unchanged in change, still to my growing sense,  
To life's desire the same, and nothing new :  
But as thou wert in dream and prescience  
At love's arising, now thou standst to view  
In the broad noon of his magnificence.

LXVIII

'T WAS on the very day winter took leave  
Of those fair fields I love, when to the skies  
The fragrant Earth was smiling in surprise  
At that her heaven-descended quick reprieve,  
I wandered forth my sorrow to relieve,  
Yet walked amid sweet pleasure in such wise  
As Adam went alone in Paradise,  
Before God of His pity fashioned Eve.

And out of tune with all the joy around  
I laid me down beneath a flowering tree  
And o'er my senses crept a sleep profound:  
In which it seemed that thou wert given to me,  
Rending my body where with hurried sound  
I feel my heart beat when I think of thee.

## LXIX

Love that I know, love I am wise in, love  
My strength, my pride, my grace, my skill untaught,  
My faith here upon earth, my hope above,  
My contemplation and perpetual thought :

    The pleasure of my fancy, my heart's fire,  
My joy, my peace, my praise, my happy theme,  
The aim of all my doing, my desire  
Of being, my life by day, by night my dream :

Love, my sweet melancholy, my distress,  
My pain, my doubt, my trouble, my despair,  
My only folly and unhappiness,  
And in my careless moments still my care :

    O love, sweet love, earthly love, love divine,  
Sayst thou to-day, O love, that thou art mine?

## LXX

THE dark and serious angel who so long  
Vexed his immortal strength in charge of me  
Hath smiled for joy and fled in liberty  
To take his pastime with the peerless throng.  
Oft had I done his noble keeping wrong,  
Wounding his heart to wonder what might be  
God's purpose in a soul of such degree :  
And there he had left me but for mandate strong.

But seeing thee with me now, his task at close  
He knoweth, and wherefore he was bid to stay  
And work confusion of so many foes.  
The thanks he looks to have from me I pay,  
Yet fear some heavenly envy as he goes  
Unto what great reward I cannot say.



## LXXI

THOUGH others love Thee less I will stand true,  
Nor can it be that I should ever leave Thee :  
Thou knowest my heart and if it could deceive Thee  
It would not wrong Thee thus as others do.  
I spend the day telling my vows anew,  
And hold my courage ready lest I grieve Thee,  
And count my words lest chance offence bereave Thee  
Of one poor sheep out of Thy flock so few :

And call on Thee my Lord, my Strength, my Stay,  
That if I faint or fall Thou wilt restore me  
And feed me with fresh comfort day by day.  
Nay though it be Thy terrors all pass o'er me  
Lo, I will fear no evil, for I say,  
Surely Thy grace will be sufficient for me.

## LXXII

I WILL be what God made me, nor protest  
Against the bent of genius in my time :  
That science of my friends robs all the best,  
While I love beauty and was born to rhyme.

Be they our mighty men and let me dwell  
In shadow among the mighty shades of old,  
With love's forsaken palace for my cell :  
Whence I look forth and all the world behold :

And say, — These better days, in best things worse,  
This bastardy of time's magificence,  
Will mend in fashion and throw off the curse,  
To crown new love with higher excellence.

Cursed though I be to live my life alone,  
My toil is for man's joy, his joy my own.

### LXXIII

I LIVE on hope and that I think do all  
Who come into this world, and since I see  
Myself in swim with such good company  
I take my comfort whatsoe'er befall.  
I abide and abide, as if more stout and tall  
My spirit would grow by waiting like a tree :  
And clear of others' toil it pleaseth me  
In dreams their quick ambition to forestall.

And if through careless eagerness I slide  
To some accomplishment, I give my voice  
Still to desire and in desire abide.  
I have no stake abroad : if I rejoice  
In what is done or doing, I confide  
Neither to friend nor foe my secret choice.

## LXXIV

YE blessed saints that now in heaven enjoy  
The purchase of those tears the world's disdain,  
Doth Love still with his war your peace annoy,  
Or hath Death freed you from his ancient pain?

Have ye no springtide and no burst of May  
In flowers and leafy trees, when solemn night  
Pants with love music, and the holy day  
Breaks on the ear with songs of heavenly light?

What make ye and what strive for? keep ye thought  
Of us, or in new excellence divine  
Is old forgot: or do ye count for naught  
What the Greek did and what the Florentine?

We keep your memories well: O in your store  
Live not our best joys treasured evermore?

## LXXV

AN heavenly joy ! But who hath ever heard,  
Who hath seen joy, or who shall ever find  
Joy's language ? There is neither speech nor word :  
Nought but itself to teach it to mankind.

Scarce in our twenty thousand painful days  
We may touch something : but there lives — beyond  
The best of art, or nature's kindest phase —  
The hope whereof our spirit is fain and fond :

The cause of beauty given to man's desires,  
Writ in the expectancy of starry skies,  
The faith which gloweth in our fleeting fires,  
The aim of all the excellence we prize :

Which but to love, pursue and pray for well  
Maketh earth heaven, and to forget it, hell.

## LXXVI

My wearied heart, whenever, after all,  
Its loves and yearnings shall be told complete,  
When gentle death shall bid it cease to beat,  
And from all dear illusions disenthral:  
However then thou shalt appear to call  
My fearful heart, since down at others' feet  
It bade me kneel so oft, I'll not retreat  
From thee nor fear before thy feet to fall.

And I shall say, — Receive this loving heart  
Which erred in sorrow only: and in sin  
Took no delight: but being forced apart  
From thee, without thee hoping thee to win,  
Most prized what most thou madest as thou art  
On earth, till heaven were open to enter in.

## LXXVII

DREARY was winter, wet with changeful sting  
Of clinging snowfall and fast-flying frost :  
And bitterer northwinds then withheld the spring  
That dallied with her promise till 't was lost.

A sunless and half-hearted summer drowned  
The flowers in needful and unwelcomed rain :  
And Autumn with a sad smile fled uncrowned  
From fruitless orchards and unripened grain.

But could the skies of this most desolate year  
In its last month learn with our love to glow,  
Men yet should rank its cloudless atmosphere  
Above the sunsets of five years ago :

Of my great praise too part should be its own,  
Now reckoned peerless for thy love alone.

## LXXVIII

AWAY now, lovely Muse, roam and be free :  
Our commerce ends for aye, thy task is done :  
Though to win thee I left all else unwon,  
Thou whom I most have won art not for me.  
My first desire, thou too forgone must be,  
Thou too O much lamented now though none  
Will turn to pity thy forsaken son,  
Nor the divine sisters will weep for thee.

None will weep for thee : thou return, O Muse,  
To thy Sicilian fields : I once have been  
On thy loved hills, and where thou first didst use  
Thy sweetly balanced rhyme, unthankful queen,  
Have plucked and wreathed thy flowers : but do thou choose  
Some happier brow to wear thy garlands green.



## LXXIX

ETERNAL FATHER who didst all create,  
In whom we live and to whose bosom move,  
To all men be Thy name known which is Love,  
Till its loud praises sound at heaven's high gate.  
Perfect Thy kingdom in our passing state,  
That here on earth Thou mayst as well approve  
Our service as Thou ownest theirs above  
Whose joy we echo and in pain await.

Grant body and soul each day their daily bread :  
And should in spite of grace fresh woe begin,  
Even as our anger soon is past and dead  
Be Thy remembrance mortal of our sin :

By Thee in paths of peace Thy sheep be led,  
And in the vale of terror comforted.



## NOTE

SONNET XXXVI. The argument is partly from  
Michael Angelo: Madrigal xix.

SONNET XXXVII. From Boccaccio.

SONNET LXXIII. Partly from the anonymous  
Sonnet No. 3,793, in the Libro Reale "Io  
vivo di speranza."

SONNET LXXIV. The first four lines translated  
from Michael Angelo's Madrigal "Beati voi."



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